

Gateway Region Urban Sprawl: Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group

May 9, 2000

MEETING NOTES

The notes provided below document the main points and meeting progress that were offered during the meeting on May 9, 2000. The notes highlight and summarize the key topics and issues that were discussed at the meeting. Selected attachments are provided in this document.

On May 9, 2000, the Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group (the "Group") convened at St. Mary's Hospital, Meeting Room A, in East St. Louis, Illinois. 27 participants were present, including three U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) representatives and four facilitation team members. A list of attendees is provided in Attachment A.

Welcome and Announcements

Mr. Dale Brown, Planning and Management Consultants, Ltd. (PMCL) facilitation team, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mr. Brown stated that the group had a full agenda and a lot of material to cover. The agenda is provided in Attachment B. He then went around the room and had each person briefly introduce themselves. Mr. Brown then introduced Ms. Noemi Emeric, EPA Gateway Team Regional Manager.

Ms. Emeric said that the EPA would be holding an outdoor media event in Granite City, Illinois, the following day from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. The purpose of this gathering will be to celebrate the completion of clean up activities at the NL/Taracorp Superfund site, which had been contaminated with lead.

Review of Previous Meetings

Mr. Brown then introduced Mr. Mike Beezhold, also of the PMCL facilitation team. Mr. Beezhold began his presentation by asking how many people were attending one of the Group's meetings for the first time. Seven people raised their hands. Mr. Beezhold explained that he would first provide an overview of the Group and its accomplishments, particularly for the benefit of the new attendees. Attachment C is a copy of Mr. Beezhold's presentation. Mr. Beezhold continued his presentation by briefly outlining the evolution of the Group. The Group was formed to look at issues related to growth in three specific Illinois counties: Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair.

Mr. Beezhold stated that the Group has come a long way since its inception in

1998. In the past year, the Group has developed a mission. The mission is as follows:

“The Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group comprises local state and federal organizations. Its mission is to gather, develop, and disseminate information regarding growth issues in the Metro East, Illinois area.”

The Group has also established three cornerstones, and developed action items in support of these cornerstones. Mr. Beezhold briefly reviewed the Group’s cornerstones: Education, Planning and the Illinois Growth Task Force. Mr. Beezhold also reviewed the action items for the Group. The Education cornerstone action items include educating the Group on the issues and their potential solutions, conducting targeted education campaigns, hosting workshops and/or conferences, and developing a vision brochure and other outreach materials. Within the Planning cornerstone, action items include collecting existing land use/comprehensive plans, reviewing examples of plans from other states, grading existing plans, and developing a regional vision to balance environment and economic development. Finally, the Illinois Growth Task Force cornerstone’s immediate action item is the preparation for and participation in a public hearing to be held on July 25, 2000 by the Illinois Growth Task Force.

As one of the Group’s accomplishments, Mr. Beezhold pointed to the vision brochure, which provides a good summary of the Group’s purpose and goals. Next, Mr. Beezhold explained that another group related to the Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group has been looking into the issue of stormwater as it relates to the Metro East area. The Metro East Regional Stormwater Committee has identified the sources of flooding in the Metro East area as including upstream growth and urbanization, drainageway obstructions, and inaccessibility to drainageways. The goals of this group include implementing Phase II regulations, developing a comprehensive plan, initiating an outreach and education effort, and securing stable funding.

Mr. Beezhold then summarized the key points of the presentation given at the Group’s previous meeting by Ms. Lois Morrison. Ms. Morrison is the manager of the Campaign for Sensible Growth (“Campaign”) in Northeastern Illinois, and she explained the mission and the accomplishments to date of her organization. Briefly, the Campaign exists to strengthen the regional competitiveness of the Chicago area by revitalizing and supporting existing communities and promoting new development that is “walkable, transit-friendly, and preserves natural areas.” The Campaign has produced several informative brochures, launched a successful membership drive, and hosted several workshops and conferences. Most importantly, Ms. Morrison outlined the workplan for the Campaign, which included defining the Campaign’s mission, its cornerstones, and the action items in support of the cornerstones. This workplan may serve as the foundation for a future workplan for the Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group. Some lessons learned by the Campaign members include the importance of having a shared vision and common objectives, including stakeholders from all perspectives, clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of members, and creating trust with the community by building a track record of accomplishment.

After summarizing Ms. Morrison's presentation, Mr. Beezhold noted that index cards had been handed out at the end of the previous meeting, on which the participants were asked to identify the cornerstone items in which they personally would most like to participate. These would be used to place Group members to either the Education or the Planning break out groups later in the meeting based on their preferences. Attachment D provides a summary of the Group members' cornerstone preferences.

Meeting Goal

Mr. Brown gave a brief overview of the goal of the present meeting, which was to "Prepare for the Illinois Growth Task Force public hearing in Collinsville on July 25, 2000." Mr. Brown's presentation is provided in Attachment E. He then repeated the mission of the Group and said that now is the time for the Group members to roll up their sleeves and work on a strategy for participating in the upcoming Task Force public hearing. As part of the preparation for this public hearing, Mr. Brown explained that the Group must inform the Metro East community of the issues and work to ensure that the hearing room is filled to capacity, to send a strong message to the Task Force. It was asked whether the intent was for the Group to communicate its message to the Task Force members themselves or to the public at large who would attend the hearing. Mr. Brown responded that the Group needs to inform everyone who is interested. Ms. Emeric added that ideally the Group wants to reach both audiences. She explained that it would be more effective for three hundred people to present a few concise messages rather than hundreds of individual messages, in which case the Task Force members would conclude that the public needed the members to come up with solutions for them. Mr. Brown then noted the constraints facing the Group as it prepares for the public hearing. These include funding, time, and the labor (effort) required from each Group member.

Illinois Growth Task Force Update

Mr. Brown then introduced Mr. Edward Weilbacher of the Southwest Illinois Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D), who spoke about the Group's third cornerstone, participation on the Illinois Growth Task Force. A handout on the Task Force provided to the Group by Mr. Weilbacher is included as Attachment F. Mr. Weilbacher began by explaining that he had attended a meeting the previous day on the logistics of the Task Force, and it seemed as though the Task Force did not yet have a clearly defined plan over the next year. He said that the meeting was primarily to discuss the role of the working groups and which issues they should address. Mr. Weilbacher then reviewed the mission of the Task Force, and said that the outcome of the Task Force's activities would be some sort of legislation, although none had been drafted to date. He also noted that Governor Ryan had just announced an initiative called "Illinois Tomorrow." Mr. Weilbacher provided the Group with a handout on the initiative, which is included as Attachment G. Essentially, this initiative does not have a clear plan, but the Governor wanted to let people know that his administration intends to address the issue of growth in Illinois. However, Mr. Weilbacher noted again that the legislature has not yet drafted any legislation pertaining to smart growth.

Mr. Weilbacher briefly discussed the makeup of the Task Force, which includes elected officials, state agencies, and public members. There are twelve public members assigned to the Task Force, but other public members are welcome to contribute as well. Three subcommittees or working groups have been formed to look at the issues in more detail. Mr. Weilbacher informed the Group that there were not enough volunteers on the Task Force to create a separate working group solely to study water issues, so water and stormwater issues were rolled into the working group for Farmland and Natural Resource Preservation. Mr. Weilbacher stressed the need to examine modern growth issues, citing as an example a long-standing lot size restriction in McHenry county which restricted lots to no less than 160 acres. He noted that this restriction currently stands at 40 acres. Many counties have problems similar to those faced in the Metro East area, such as stormwater. Mr. Weilbacher continued by noting that the purchase and/or transfer of development rights are among the issues that the Task Force will attempt to address. Also, he noted that some states such as Maryland and Pennsylvania have zoning regulations across the entire state.

Regarding the upcoming public hearing, Mr. Weilbacher noted that Senator Maitland had not given the working group leaders any particular instructions on how to announce the hearing to the public, so it is especially important for individuals and entities such as the Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group to get involved. The working group for Farmland and Natural Resource Preservation will meet again in Bloomington, Illinois on May 25th. Mr. Beezhold asked whether the minutes from this and other Task Force/working group meetings would be available to the public. The notes would allow the Group to better provide insight and support to Mr. Weilbacher. Mr. Weilbacher indicated that he will try to get these notes to the Group members as soon as they become available to him.

Mr. Weilbacher said that the full Task Force will meet again on May 31st in Springfield, Illinois. The three public hearings will be in Bloomington on June 15th, in Des Plaines on July 6th, and in Collinsville on July 25th. It was asked whether the Group members should try to attend the other public hearings, and Mr. Weilbacher thought that it would be a good opportunity in helping to prepare for the public hearing in Collinsville. Mr. Beezhold asked whether the Task Force was working in cooperation with the Illinois Tomorrow initiative supporters. Mr. Weilbacher responded that the Task Force plans to go a lot further than the initiative purports to. Ultimately, it will be up to the legislature to decide what will be done about growth issues. He also noted that it is important that legislative mandates be economically viable and realistic in order to be successful in the long term. A Group member noted that the Illinois Tomorrow initiative largely encompasses work that is already being done in part by other agencies, citizen groups and organizations. Mr. Beezhold then asked how important these public hearings were in influencing the final output of the Task Force. Mr. Weilbacher replied that Senator Maitland wants to hear from the public regarding what is important to them. It is better to address issues before they reach crisis proportions, although people often do not become involved in an issue until it becomes a crisis.

Public Hearing Preparation

Mr. Brown prepared the Group for the two participatory activities by explaining that the participants would have to identify target audiences, the appropriate modes of communicating with the target audiences, and assign members to various tasks. Then the Group members divided into two separate groups according to their interest in either the Planning or the Education cornerstone. The purpose of dividing the participants into smaller groups was to enhance the efficiency of the session by making it easier for participants to “divide and conquer” the tasks, and to afford all participants the opportunity to be heard. A list of participants in the smaller groups is provided as Attachment H.

Target Audience

The task for the two smaller groups was to determine which audiences the Group should target in preparation for the July 25th public hearing. The two primary target audiences are the general public and the “key players,” (i.e., the elected officials). Each break out group was tasked with determining the target audience, identifying the modes of communication most likely to reach each target audience, and finally, determining which Group members would take the lead in communicating with the target audiences. As part of this effort, a worksheet was provided to each participant for them to write on. A copy of the worksheet is provided as Attachment I. A spokesperson from each break out group provided a summary of the modes of communication and a brief explanation of why it was identified as important. In this way, all of the participants could hear the results, ask questions, and see the commonalties and differences in the results generated by the two groups. A complete summary of the product of the first group activity is presented in Attachment J.

Group Message

The purpose of the second activity was to determine which message(s) the Group should communicate to the target audiences about the public hearing. This process involved stating the message(s), then identifying what the facts are in support of the message(s), and the sources of this information (facts). The member who presented the message(s) is also responsible for identifying the facts and respective sources and providing them at the next Group meeting. The messages developed during this activity are presented in Attachment K.

Next Steps

Mr. Beezhold announced that the goal of the next meeting would be to finalize preparations for the Illinois Growth Task Force public hearing in Metro East on July 25,

2000, including a status report of the Group's ongoing efforts.

Meeting Adjournment

Mr. Brown wrapped up the meeting by asking all of the participants to return to the next meeting with specific facts that can be used to support their proposed messages. This supporting documentation will be important, as not all of the members agree on each message and actual facts will help the Group to decide which message(s) it will support.

One participant suggested that the Group might want to hold a second meeting before the July 25 public hearing, possibly in early July, as there was a lot of preparation yet to be done. Mr. Brown asked the other participants for their opinion. Ms. Emeric pointed out that there is not enough money in the EPA's budget to support a facilitated meeting, but that she and the other EPA staff would be more than happy to host such a meeting themselves. In response to the offer, the Group agreed that July 7 would be a good meeting date.

Ms. Emeric reminded the Group of the EPA's media event in Granite City the following day. Ms. Kehoe announced a community forum on urban sprawl, to be held on Monday, May 22, 2000 at Southwestern Illinois College, beginning at 7:30 p.m. (see Attachment L). This forum is being sponsored by the Kaskaskia Group, the Illinois chapter of the Sierra Club. Mr. Brown thanked the members for their hard work at this meeting and urged the Group not to lose its momentum. The meeting was then adjourned.